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Ministry of Advanced Education

PROVINCIAL FUNDING WILL SUPPORT CONSERVATION RESEARCH

VANCOUVER – The Province is investing $213,000 in a research project that will help discover unknown species of Canada's plants, fungi and insects, and improving environmental management of the country's biodiversity, announced Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell today.

The funding will go toward the $20 million Canadian University Biodiversity Consortium project, which includes 12 universities that will create a networked database of all biodiversity-related information held in Canadian institutions. The B.C. contribution is being led by the University of British Columbia at the UBC Botanical Garden and the Beaty Biodiversity Museum, where areas of research include the evolution of jumping spiders and the sex life of sunflowers.

"This research consortium will aid Canadian conservation efforts by helping to preserve the genetic diversity of plants, fungi and insects," said Coell. "It will help establish and promote the best means for a sustainable use of this natural wealth. At the same time, it will allow Canada and Canadian university scientists to maintain and improve their standing as world leaders in the field of inventorying, understanding, protecting and promoting biodiversity."

Canada's capacity to identify new species and preserve existing collections has declined in recent years but there are several important collections in universities, museums and botanical gardens. The consortium will gather the information in these collections and the expertise of more than 40 research participants to create a web-based, information-rich database that can be accessed by anyone with an interest in Canada's animal and plant life.

Biological collections are used for determining species and ecosystem responses to climate change and other environmental disturbances, to biological invasions, and to forestry and agricultural practices.

Since 2001, a total of 493 projects and over $310 million in funding have been approved by the provincial government under the British Columbia Knowledge Development Fund. This funding has leveraged $334 million from the Canada Foundation for Innovation and another $263 million from other non-provincial government sources, for a total investment in British Columbia's research infrastructure of over $907 million.

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